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KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education, Health and Human Services

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE

of

Mustary Mariyam

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Curriculum and Instruction

Major: Early Childhood Education

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON IMMIGRANT
AND REFUGEE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' FUNDS OF
IDENTITY AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO VIEWS OF TEACHING IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE USA**

October 31, 2023

9:00-11:00 a.m.

[Zoom Link](#)

Mustary Mariyam

M.Ed. Early Childhood Education
Kent State University, USA 2018

M.A. English
Rajshahi University, Bangladesh, 2008

B.A. English
Rajshahi University, Bangladesh, 2007

Mustary has over 13 years of experience working with children, families and teachers in a variety of settings including different countries and different school systems. Her research interest includes immigrant children, family school partnerships and immigrant teachers and teacher education. She has presented her research work in a number of conferences and some of the works have been published in scholarly journals. Her current study focuses on understanding the immigrant and refugee high schoolers funds of identity and its relationship to the views of teaching young children in the context of USA.

A qualitative study on immigrant and refugee high school students' Funds of Identity and its relationship to views of teaching in the Context of the USA

This study aimed to investigate the impact of Funds of Identity (FOI) (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) on immigrant and refugee aspiring teachers' perceptions of teaching in the USA, their motivations for choosing a teaching career, and their views on the role of early childhood educators. Existing research points to a disconnect between immigrant and refugee children and their teachers in early childhood education (Carothers et al., 2019). However, the underrepresentation of immigrant teachers in these classrooms remain an unexplored issue.

Participants were five immigrant and refugee high schoolers in the early childhood education pathway program in the midwestern region of USA. Data collection included student created artifacts, focus group discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The study found that FOI profoundly shaped their views on teaching in the USA. Their experience as caregivers and a strong desire to influence early childhood education motivated their teaching careers while their social and familial backgrounds reinforced teaching as a sense of moral duty linked to social justice. They thrived in structured educational environments as both learners and future educators.

However, language and cultural challenges in teacher education and the field emerged as complex issues encompassing difficulties in adapting to college life and financial worries. Yet, participants perceived their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds as strengths that could make a positive impact on children's lives and society, driving them to pursue their dreams in the teaching field.